

## ESSAY II.

ON DECISION OF CHARACTER.

### LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WE have several times talked of this bold quality, and acknowledged its great importance. Without it, a human being, with powers at best but feeble and surrounded by innumerable things tending to perplex, to divert, and to frustrate, their operations, is indeed a pitiable atom, the sport of divers and casual impulses. It is a poor and disgraceful thing, not to be able to reply, with some degree of certainty to the simple questions, What will you be? What will you do?

A little acquaintance with mankind will supply numberless illustrations of the importance of this qualification. You will often see a person anxiously hesitating a long time between different, or opposite determinations, though impatient of the pain of such a state, and ashamed of the debility. A faint impulse of preference alternates toward the one, and toward the other; and the mind, while thus held in a trembling balance, is vexed that it cannot get some new thought, or feeling, or motive; that it has not more sense, more resolution, more of anything that would save it from envying even the decisive instinct of brutes. It wishes that any circumstance might happen, or any person might appear, that could deliver it from the miserable suspense.

In many instances, when a determination is adopted, it is frustrated by this temperament. A man, for example, resolves on a journey tomorrow, which he is not under an absolute necessity to undertake, but the inducements appear this evening, so strong, that he does not think it possible he can hesitate in the morning. In the morning, however,